

1. Overview

1.1 Our commitment to promoting disability equality

As part of our policy of treating everyone fairly and justly, we are committed to promoting disability equality. This applies to the residents and customers we serve, those we have to investigate or take regulatory enforcement action against, and the staff and contractors we employ.

1.2 How this Scheme has been developed

1.2.1 This is South Cambridgeshire District Council's (SCDC) first Disability Equality Scheme (DES). It takes account of:

- (a) statutory requirements set out in the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005 (DDA) and the Code of Practice produced by the Disability Rights Commission on "The Duty to Promote Disability Equality" (see Appendix A for more details);
- (b) issues raised by local disability groups and people with personal experience of disability issues in South Cambridgeshire;
- (c) the views and experience of managers across the range of Council functions; and
- (d) emerging good practice from the disability equality schemes being developed by other councils;
- (e) the experience gained from developing and implementing the Council's Race Equality Scheme.

1.2.2 This Disability Equality Scheme adopts the official DDA definition of disability. A person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial or long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

1.2.3 The preparation of the Scheme has itself proved to be a useful process. It has provided an opportunity for constructive challenge from local disability groups. It has raised awareness of the issues and stimulated debate amongst both councillors and managers. The Council would like to thank all those who have taken the time to get involved, including Cambridgeshire County Council's Research Group.

1.3 Summary of the Scheme

1.3.1 This overview represents the first of four parts of the Scheme. Part 2 sets out the context of local disability needs, the Council's existing policies and the challenges and opportunities facing the district over the next three years. Part 3 reviews the Council's current practice in carrying out the general and specific duties for promoting disability equality. In the light of this, Part 4 then sets out an action plan for the way forward.

1.3.2 The main observations on the local context are that:

- (a) higher levels of disability are found amongst elderly people and amongst particular ethnic minority communities, not least Travellers.
- (b) the Council's objectives and priorities are consistent with the need to address local disability issues.

- 1.3.3 The review of current practice concludes that our services are already doing a lot to meet the general duty under the DDA – more than we normally tend to recognise or publicise. At the same time, there are a number of ways in which we could improve our systems and procedures.
- 1.3.4 The action plan focuses on the need for:
- (a) more detailed research information and performance monitoring;
 - (b) greater consultation and engagement with local disability groups;
 - (c) more systematic assessment of the impact of policies and services on disabled people;
 - (d) better external communication on disability issues;
 - (e) more disability awareness training for both councillors and staff; and
 - (f) reinforcing raised awareness of disability issues through our employment practices.

1.4 Implementation arrangements

- 1.4.1 Whilst the publication of the Disability Equality Scheme marks the end of a lot of hard work, in other ways, it is just the beginning. The focus will now need to switch to implementing the action plan and strengthening our services for disabled people, within the resources available. We will continue to engage with local disability groups and disabled people.
- 1.4.2 This follow-up work will be aided by the creation of a £10,000 Equal Opportunities budget (*subject to approval by the full Council in November 2006*). Its purpose is to co-ordinate SCDC's corporate approach to all types of equalities issues (eg, disability, race and age), fund equalities training and meet the costs (on behalf of services) of requests for interpretation and translation of documents/leaflets into alternative formats.
- 1.4.3 The lead Cabinet member for overseeing this Disability Equality Scheme is the portfolio-holder for Resources, Staffing, Information and Customer Services (Councillor Simon Edwards). The lead officer for co-ordinating the day-to-day approach will be confirmed once the review of second tier posts has been completed. For the time being, Tim Wetherfield, Head of Policy and Communication, will take on the role.
- 1.4.4 The Disability Equality Scheme applies to all Councillors and Council employees. All Cabinet portfolio-holders and managers are expected to promote disability equality through all Council services, particularly those for which they have responsibility.
- 1.4.5 The Council will receive an annual report (the first by January 2008) on progress made in implementing the Disability Equality Scheme.

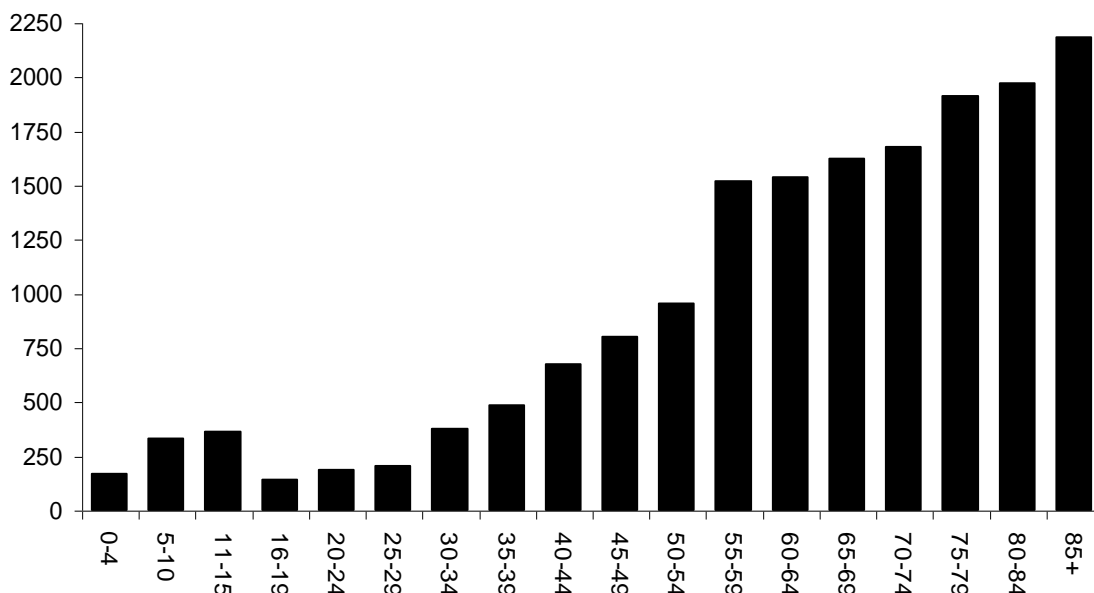
Please note: The service groupings referred to in this Scheme (community services, environmental services, housing services, planning services, revenue services and corporate services) are based on categories used by the Council's 'Service First' project and are consistent with the approach taken to SCDC's Race Equality Scheme. The Council is in the process of reviewing and streamlining the organisation's management structure.

2. The local context

2.1 Disability issues in South Cambridgeshire

- 2.1.1 Whilst the understanding of disability needs is growing, the information available from existing national population statistics is not as well developed as it for some other equality issues, such as ethnicity.
- 2.1.2 The 2001 Census looked at health issues in general, rather than examining specific disability concerns. This found that, in South Cambridgeshire:
- (a) 13.3% of local residents have a limiting long-term illness;
 - (b) 2.3% of 16-74 year olds in the district are permanently sick or disabled;
 - (c) 1.3% of local residents provide unpaid care for more than 50 hours per week.
- 2.1.3 National statistics also show that disability is strongly related to age. Whilst 2.1% of 16-19 year olds are recorded as having a disability, this rises to 27.5% of the 65-69 age group. Indeed, 78% of people aged 85 and over are disabled. This is significant given that, in 2005, 16% of South Cambridgeshire's population was aged 65 or over, and 8% was over 75. By relating national disability prevalence rates to district population figures, the County Council's Research Group has estimated that 17,100 of 136,300 South Cambs residents have a disability (that is, one resident in every eight). More details can be found in Appendix B.

Estimated disabled population in South Cambs by age group



- 2.1.4 In view of the age profile of ethnic minorities in Cambridgeshire, the County Council's Research Group has also identified that limiting long-term illnesses are particularly prevalent amongst Bangladeshi men and Pakistani women in the county. This is particularly relevant in view of the significant Asian/Asian British populations in Teversham (2.1%), Girton (2.4%) and Milton (3.5%), as set out in our Race Equality Scheme.

- 2.1.5 The Traveller Needs Assessment 2005–10 has highlighted particular issues affecting the largest ethnic minority in the district as a whole (1% of the population).
- (a) 44% of the English Gypsies and 47% of Irish Travellers who were interviewed reported close family/household members with health problems and/or children with disabilities (including epilepsy, blindness, deafness, kidney disease, genetic conditions and learning disability).
 - (b) Health status was poorest for Gypsies /Travellers on council sites, although this may reflect the older cohort on such sites.
- 2.1.6 Most of our existing monitoring data about disability needs relates to housing issues.
- (a) The 2002 general Housing Needs Survey in South Cambridgeshire found that 8.8% of households reported special needs.
 - (b) The current Housing Strategy highlights that one third of the households using the housing support service have mental health issues. An estimated 40% of GP consultations in the district relate to mental health problems.
 - (c) The Cambridgeshire Learning Disability Partnership has indicated a need for numerous supported living places to be made available in future to meet the needs of people whose carers are becoming increasingly elderly and unable to cope, or young people reaching the end of their time in residential education.
 - (d) According to SCDC's Homelessness Strategy, around one in ten people who have been accepted as homeless suffer from mental health problems. A further 1% - 2% of homelessness acceptances were for those with a learning disability.
 - (e) Of around 200 grants awarded by the Home Improvement Agency in 2005/06, 108 were Disabled Facilities Grants (all recipients have disabilities) and 90 were repair assistance grants (75% of the clients have a disability or are elderly and infirm people).
- 2.1.7 Other SCDC statistics reveal that:
- (a) 1,676 households receive our assisted collection service for waste and recycling;
 - (b) 8% of the Council's staff in 2005/06 declared themselves as having a disability.

2.2 Local policy context

- 2.2.1 It is important to view disability issues in the context of local policies, as set out in our joint work with other partners, the Council's own objectives and priorities and the strategies that guide the development of SCDC services.
- 2.2.2 SCDC is a lead member of the South Cambridgeshire Strategic Partnership, which is preparing a new Sustainable Communities Strategy. In the meantime, we are helping to implement the Partnership's existing Community Strategy 2004 - 2007, aiming for:
- (a) active, safe and healthy communities;
 - (b) building successful new communities;
 - (c) a prosperous district;
 - (d) good access to services;
 - (e) quality homes for all; and
 - (f) a high quality environment.

- 2.2.3 The Council itself has four corporate objectives:
- (a) high quality, accessible, value-for-money services (including a commitment that no one should find it difficult to access our services because of disability);
 - (b) quality village life;
 - (c) a sustainable future for South Cambridgeshire; and
 - (d) a better future through partnership.
- 2.2.4 SCDC has identified three corporate priorities for 2006/07 and 2007/08, aimed at:
- (a) improving customer service;
 - (b) achieving successful, sustainable new communities at Northstowe and other major new settlements; and
 - (c) increasing the supply of affordable housing.
- 2.2.5 New customer service standards, under the 'Service First' banner, were introduced in October 2006. These aim to put customers first, deliver outstanding service and provide easy access to services and information. This includes a commitment to arrange for translation, large type, Braille or audio tapes on request.
- 2.2.6 The Council's Code of Conduct places general obligations on councillors to: promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person; treat others with respect; and not do anything which compromises or is likely to compromise the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of, the authority.
- 2.2.7 Our corporate Equality and Diversity policy aims to give equal treatment and access to everyone, both in providing services and employing staff. Its goals are to:
- (a) develop an effective workforce delivering a high quality service;
 - (b) ensure the Council's workforce reflects the diversity of the local population;
 - (c) raise the level of diversity awareness and understanding among employees and Members alike;
 - (d) work towards eliminating discrimination (direct or indirect) and all forms of harassment;
 - (e) understand the needs of our customers and provide services that are accessible to them and sensitive to their specific needs;
 - (f) act as a role model for others through good practice in service delivery & employment and seek to influence partner organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors;
 - (g) be accountable to South Cambs residents and encourage active participation of communities/groups in the development, review and application of the Council's policies and practices;
 - (h) target our resources to deliver services more effectively to groups and communities most excluded.
- 2.2.8 This commitment to equality and diversity is supported by:
- (a) our Race Equality Scheme 2005–2008 (updated in July 2006), which places a priority on addressing the needs of Gypsies and Travellers;
 - (b) new procedures in line with the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006;
 - (c) the Human Resources Strategy 2004–2007 and a range of employment policies, including a Bullying and Harassment policy agreed in July 2005.

- 2.2.9 The current Housing Strategy 2004–2007 makes specific references to:
- (a) promoting the Lifetime Homes standard and incorporating disabled units in general new build sites;
 - (b) decommissioning older sheltered housing schemes that are not suitable for frail elderly people and providing new purpose built sheltered housing for them - working with the Papworth Trust as a specialist provider; and
 - (c) using the Council's Home Improvement Agency to help households in the private sector to adapt their properties with disabled facilities grants.
- 2.2.10 The Homelessness Strategy 2003–2008 identifies actions to:
- (a) liaise with mental health partners on the availability of floating support and longer-term support services for those people with mental health problems, and on arrangements for people being discharged from Fulbourn Hospital; and
 - (b) complete work on the Disability Register, which will map the supply of adapted housing across all tenures.
- 2.2.11 The Development Control Policies DPD, submitted in January 2006 as part of the Local Development Framework, stipulates that there must be safe and convenient access for all to public buildings and spaces, and to public transport, including for those people with limited mobility and those with other impairments such as of sight or hearing.
- 2.3 Issues facing South Cambridgeshire**
- 2.3.1 The Council's approach to disability equality over the next three years also needs to take account of other opportunities and challenges facing SCDC.
- 2.3.2 Council tax capping in 2005/06 reduced SCDC's budget by almost a fifth, even though we were already amongst the lowest spenders on services per resident in local government. Financial constraints continue to be a big issue in the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy up to 2011/12. Further budget reductions of £1.3 million have had to be identified for 2007/08. The implications on our capacity to maintain and develop services should not be under-estimated. The focus of the Scheme's action plan is, therefore, on making simple but effective changes to systems and procedures and raising awareness and changing attitudes.
- 2.3.3 The Disability Equality Scheme (including the action plan) may need to adapt to other issues facing the Council, too. These include:
- (a) additional service pressures arising from an increasingly elderly population and the projected 33% growth in the number of South Cambridgeshire residents by 2016 (eg, with the building of Northstowe and other growth areas);
 - (b) the implementation of new policy requirements (such as the move to a choice-based lettings policy in housing in 2007/08) in a way that takes account of the needs of people with disabilities;
 - (c) possible legislation arising from the Local Government White Paper in October 2006 on "Strong and Prosperous Communities" and an awaited Green Paper with proposals on Discrimination Law Review;
 - (d) changes to the Council's internal ways of working arising from the on-going implementation of the Transformation Project and recommendations from the Audit Commission's corporate governance inspection (expected in January 2007).

3. Reviewing our current approach to disability equality

3.1 Putting the general duty into practice

The table below gives examples of the range of services that the Council already provides, which help to put the general duty into practice. The right-hand column indicates the way in which particular services contribute to the different parts of the duty

Key to the general duty: A = promote equality of opportunity; B = eliminate unlawful discrimination; C = eliminate harassment; D = promote positive attitudes; E = encourage participation in public life; F = taking account of a persons' disabilities.

	Duty
General (available across a wide range of SCDC services)	
Advice for people with a disability (planning, housing, building control)	A, B, F
Availability of home visits	A, F
SCDC information available in large print, Braille or in audio format, on request	A, E
Availability of sign language / MAKATON interpretation by staff.	A, F
Wide range of information on the Council's website (www.scambs.gov.uk)	A
Work with other agencies who help disabled people	A – F
Community Services	
Grant support for local disability groups / Funding Fair for voluntary organisations	A – F
Liaison/consultation with local disability groups and quarterly Voluntary Sector Forum	A – F
Disability awareness training for voluntary organisations and sports coaches	C, D
Community Access Points	A, E, F
Access improvements at Milton County Park	A
Support for Mobile Warden schemes, helping elderly people live in their own homes	F
Sports development initiatives to increase opportunities for disabled people	A, E, F
Environmental Services	
Assisted waste and recycling collections	F
Different features on green and black wheeled bins to help tell them apart	A
Clinical waste collection service for dialysis waste and dressings	F
Home Improvements Agency and disabled facilities grants	F
Licensing service requires taxis to accept passengers with guide or hearing dogs	A
Some private hire vehicles, licensed by SCDC, have wheelchair access	A
Housing Services	
Priority given to housing applicants with a disability in the Council's lettings policy	F
Adaptations to homes for SCDC tenants	F
Applicants with particular disability needs nominated to Papworth Trust properties	F

	Duty
Opportunities for tenant participation	E
Provision of sheltered housing and support plans to identify disability needs of tenants	A, F
On-going building works to ensure sheltered housing communal rooms are DDA compliant	A
Floating support to help people with a disability sustain their tenancy agreements	F
Supporting People partnership enables people with a disability to remain in the community	F
Community lifeline service (emergency alert) for people living at home	F
Housing policy promotes the building of affordable housing to Lifetime Homes standard	A
Housing policy helps secure purpose-built new homes for people with a disability	A, F
Planning Services	
Concessionary fares scheme: free travel passes for disabled people	A
New LDF development criteria on safe and convenient access	A, B
Access statements required as part of planning applications	A, B
Specific training on access issues and the planning system for planning officers	A, B
Relevant buildings checked for compliance with Part M of Building Regulations	A, B
Preparations being made for setting up an Access Advisory Group	A, E
Revenue Services	
Discretionary rate relief for charitable organisations supporting people with disabilities	A-F
Proactive in making sure disabled people receive any entitlement to council tax discount	F
Communications with individuals adapted to take account of their particular disabilities	F
Individual circumstances considered in discretionary awards or debt enforcement action	F
Corporate Services	
Payments to the Council can now be made in a variety of different ways	A
Polling stations are DDA compliant. Postal voting arranged on request	A, E
Contact Centre open 8am–8pm Monday-Saturday	A, E
Corporate identity guide on presentation of letters/public documents reflects good practice	A, E
Accessibility features at Cambourne offices and Waterbeach Depot	A, E
Wide range of information on website (includes resizable fonts and an 'accessibility' page)	A, E
Large-print version of quarterly South Cambs magazine produced	A, E
Consultations publicised via web & South Cambs magazine: replies can be made on-line	A, E
Steps being taken to reduce length of Council/Cabinet meetings	A, E
Support and advice for SCDC employees with a disability	
Occupational health assessments available	F
Reasonable adjustments made to working conditions	A, F
Flexible working options available	F
Equal opportunities training provided for councillors and staff	C, D

Further examples of SCDC practices that promote disability equality can be found in Appendix C.

3.2 Performance monitoring and customer satisfaction data on disability issues

- 3.2.1 Some steps have been taken to monitor the take-up of services by people with a disability, but this has been limited by capacity constraints. Monitoring forms were sent to housing tenants and benefit claimants in April 2006, and there have been thousands of replies. These are being processed, but the competing workload pressures of providing the day-to-day services have delayed the analysis.
- 3.2.2 A number of SCDC's own customer satisfaction surveys (such as complaints reply monitoring) include questions about disability, but this does not take place across all services. In the context of the significant budget cuts that have had to be made, it is unlikely that there will be the capacity or resources to spread this practice more widely.
- 3.2.3 Satisfaction levels amongst customers with a disability are monitored as part of the national requirements for three-yearly Best Value satisfaction surveys. The findings from the 2006/07 surveys will be available next Spring. In the meantime, the most recent local results relate to the 2003/04 surveys. These show that, in most cases, the replies from disabled people are broadly in line with the views of all respondents. The apparent disparity in perceptions of the planning service needs to be viewed with caution since this is based on only 21 replies from former planning applicants with a disability. However, the difference in the respective proportions of respondents who made a complaint to the Council in the previous year does appear significant, and merits further exploration.

SCDC results from 2003/04 Best Value satisfaction surveys	All respondents	Those with a disability
Residents' overall satisfaction with the Council's services	59%	59%
Residents' satisfaction with cleanliness standards in the district	63%	65%
Residents' satisfaction with household waste collection	85%	86%
Residents' satisfaction with recycling facilities	68%	74%
Benefit claimants' satisfaction with benefits service overall	84%	83%
Council tenants' satisfaction with housing service overall	81%	82%
Planning applicants' satisfaction with planning service overall	63%	48%
Residents' satisfaction with sports/leisure facilities	52%	47%
Residents' satisfaction with parks/open spaces	78%	74%
Residents who made a complaint to SCDC in last 12 months	15%	25%
Complainants' satisfaction with the way complaint was handled	31%	42%
Residents who contacted the Council in last 24 months	56%	64%
Satisfaction with contact with the Council in last 24 months	58%	60%

- 3.2.4 In Part 4, Section A of the action plan sets out how we aim to meet the specific duty to gather information about our performance on disability equality. This includes:
- (a) making use of academic research to develop more accurate figures of disability levels in South Cambridgeshire (replacing the extrapolations in Appendix A);
 - (b) taking part in a new sub-regional assessment to update the 2002 Housing Needs Survey information about households with special needs;
 - (c) analysing the replies from disabled respondents to the 2006/07 Best Value surveys;
 - (d) completing the analysis of the benefit claimant and housing tenant monitoring forms.

3.3 Involvement of disabled people in preparing this Scheme

- 3.3.1 In addition to on-going regular liaison between the Council and local disability groups, specific steps were taken to:
- (a) seek views at the Voluntary Sector Forum in October 2006 (see Appendix D); and
 - (b) invite comments from councillors, staff, trades unions and visitors to SCDC's website with personal experience of disability issues in the district (see Appendix E).
- 3.3.2 Some of the recurring themes from the consultation seem to be that:
- (a) disability needs have been understated by official statistics, and are growing;
 - (b) disabled people can be frustrated by practical difficulties that get in the way of services and by what is perceived as a lack of thought about disability needs by service providers. Some people with a disability are becoming more assertive about what they have a right to expect from public authorities;
 - (c) Housing and Planning services are highly relevant to promoting disability equality;
 - (d) the accessibility features of the Cambourne offices are good, but SCDC needs to make sure that we are DDA compliant in other ways and that we engage with local disability groups more. The implications of SCDC budget cutbacks for disabled people also need to be considered more fully;
 - (e) some of the most effective changes that can be made are also the least expensive.
- 3.3.3 A number of concerns about transport issues were highlighted as part of the consultation, and these have been brought to the attention of the lead officer for disability equality at Cambridgeshire County Council.
- 3.3.4 Section B of the action plan in Part 4 sets out in more detail how we will involve local disability groups and disabled people in the further development and implementation of this Scheme, following its publication. This includes:
- (a) seeking feedback from the Voluntary Sector Forum about the Scheme and progress being made;
 - (b) engaging service managers in discussions with local disability groups about relevant services and strategies;
 - (c) getting an Access Advisory Group up and running, particularly in relation to planning application access statements.

3.4 Service impact assessments

- 3.4.1 Whilst SCDC provides a range of services that help to meet the needs of disabled people, capacity constraints have meant that there has not always been the time to assess the impact of policies and services on our customers. As part of the Race Equality Scheme, the Council has already recognised the need to develop a more systematic approach to all types of equality impact assessments. On disability issues, this is likely to take account of:
- (a) what information exists about disability needs and service use/non-usage;
 - (b) how existing or proposed policies and services could affect disabled people;
 - (c) what measures could mitigate any adverse impact or what alternative approaches could better help to promote disability equality;
 - (d) what possible future adverse impacts there may be;
 - (e) who, from local disability groups, might be able to give advice on these issues.

- 3.4.2 More details on how the Council will assess the impact of policy proposals and existing services can be found in Section C of the action plan in Part 4. This will take place as part of:
- (a) the annual service planning process;
 - (b) the 'equal opportunities implications' section of Cabinet / committee reports, where particularly relevant;
 - (c) the development and review of service strategies;
 - (d) a programme (to be developed) to review the impact of existing services. The specific details and schedule still need to be discussed with relevant managers and Cabinet members.

3.5 Conclusions

- 3.5.1 The review of the Council's current approach to disability equality has highlighted the need to:
- (a) develop our understanding of disability issues ('hidden' disabilities as well as physical disabilities);
 - (b) recognise more fully, within SCDC, the positive impact that our services are already making in promoting disability equality;
 - (c) communicate more fully to local disability groups and disabled people the extent of support and services that are available;
 - (d) make greater use of the advice and expertise on offer from local disability groups.
 - (e) make sure that the action plan is realistic and achievable, in the context of resource constraints.
- 3.5.2 Whilst Disability Equality Scheme will operate for the next three years (until December 2009), the current action plan focuses primarily on what the Council aims to achieve in the coming year. The Scheme and action plan will be updated every 12 months (with the first annual report made by January 2008). This will take account of:
- (a) progress made in implementing actions in the previous year;
 - (b) feedback from local disability groups and disabled people;
 - (c) new information about disability needs in the district arising from performance monitoring activities; and
 - (d) any relevant developments in the issues facing the district (see section 2.3) or other important issues identified via service impact assessments.

4. Disability Equality Action Plan: 2006 – 2009

No.	Action	Who by?	By when?
A. More detailed research information and performance monitoring			
A1	Analyse the responses to the monitoring form sent to housing tenants.	Pauline Gardner	March 2007
A2	Analyse the responses to the monitoring form sent to benefit claimants.	Dawn Graham	June 2007
A3	Study and compare the responses from people with a disability to the 2006/07 Best Value satisfaction surveys in order to identify any issues that may need follow-up action.	DES lead officer	June 2007
A4	SCDC to take part in the sub-regional Housing Market Assessment (including questions on the housing needs of disabled people).	Mike Knight	June 2007
A5	Draw on annual updates from the three-year research project at Manchester University (supported by Cambridgeshire County Council) to clarify the prevalence of disability needs at district-level.	DES lead officer	June 2007 June 2008 June 2009
B. Greater consultation and engagement with local disability groups			
B1	Present the new Disability Equality Scheme at the Voluntary Sector Forum and receive initial feedback.	Tim Wetherfield/ Tricia Pope	January 2007
B2	Arrange for SCDC's website to be tested by people with a range of different disabilities in order to assess its accessibility and identify options for future improvement.	Steve Rayment	March 2007
B3	Draw up a programme of service managers to attend meetings of the Voluntary Sector Forum (from April 2007) in order to seek views/advice from local disability groups.	Tim Wetherfield	March 2007
B4	Explore opportunities (within resource constraints) for SCDC officers to attend existing meetings held by local disability groups as an alternative to asking disabled people to attend consultation events arranged by SCDC.	DES lead officer	April 2007
B5	Establish an Access Advisory Group and provide relevant training to participants.	David Rush / Susannah Harris	April 2007
B6	Purchase a portable induction loop for use at consultation events run by SCDC at any locations that do not already have this facility.	Tricia Pope	June 2007
B7	Seek views from the Voluntary Sector Forum on SCDC's progress in implementing the Disability Equality Scheme – to be taken into account in the first annual report.	DES lead officer/ Tricia Pope	September 2007

No.	Action	Who by?	By when?
C. More systematic assessment of the impact of policies and services			
C1	Produce advice for managers on the intranet on the issues to be taken into account when filling in the 'equal opportunities implications' section of committee reports.	Tim Wetherfield	January 2007
C2	Address disability issues within the current review of the corporate complaints procedure.	Geoff Bridgeman	February 2007
C3	Develop a programme for reviewing the impact of existing services, in consultation with relevant managers and Cabinet members.	DES lead officer	April 2007
C4	Consider disability needs within annual service planning process.	All service managers	April 07 April 08 April 09
C5	Address disability issues within strategies being developed by SCDC over the next three years (eg, Sustainable Communities Strategy, Community Safety Strategy, Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy). Local disability groups to be consulted.	Relevant service managers with DES lead officer	To be included in timetables for strategy review
C6	Review the Council's decision-making forward programme to identify those planned reports for which details on disability equality implications would be highly relevant.	DES lead officer	At least quarterly
D. Better external communication on disability issues			
D1	Feature the finalised Disability Equality Scheme on SCDC's website and send the link to local disability groups.	Tim Wetherfield	December 2006
D2	Publicise the availability of large-print versions of Council agenda papers.	Richard May	January 2007
D3	Install software for SCDC's website, which will enable web pages to be read out to people with a visual impairment.	Steve Rayment	March 2007
D4	Make sure that new SCDC leaflets & publications highlight the availability of alternative formats / large print versions.	Sally Carroll	From April 2007
D5	Feature the key points from the Disability Equality Scheme (and progress made) in the Council's annual Performance Plan.	DES lead officer	June 07 June 08 June 09
D6	Produce an annual report on progress in implementing the Disability Equality Scheme and update/develop the action plan.	DES lead officer	January 2008 then annually
D7	Feature disability issues in future editions of the quarterly South Cambs magazine (eg, publicity about the new DES, a 'day in the life' article from a resident with a disability, coverage of support and advice available from SCDC).	Sally Carroll	At least twice a year

No.	Action	Who by?	By when?
E. More disability awareness training for both councillors and staff			
E1	Raise awareness of the key points of the Disability Equality Scheme via the Chief Executive's regular message to SCDC staff	Tim Wetherfield	December 2006
E2	Make a presentation to a meeting of Executive Management Team, for subsequent cascade of the key points by managers to their team meetings.	Tim Wetherfield / service managers	February 2007
E3	Arrange a presentation by local disability group(s) at a full Council meeting, as a precursor for a Member training event.	DES lead officer	July 2007
E4	Run a lunchtime seminar open to all staff on disability awareness, using speakers from local disability group(s)	Jill Mellors	July 2007
E5	Run a training session for all SCDC councillors, using speakers from local disability group(s).	DES lead officer	September 2007
E6	Provide disability awareness training for all SCDC managers, using speakers from local disability group(s).	Jill Mellors	September 2007
F. Reinforcing raised awareness of disability issues through employment practices.			
F1	Make available on SCDC's website a job application form that can be completed electronically.	Susan Gardner Craig	December 2006
F2	Hold regular discussions with trades unions in order to discuss reasonable adaptations and support that the Council can provide staff with a disability.	Susan Gardner Craig	January 2007 onwards
F3	Carry out a data-capture survey of all SCDC employees, to gather up-to-date personal information (including details of disabilities and needs).	Susan Gardner Craig	March 2007
F4	Update managers' job descriptions (as these come up for renewal as part of the Transformation Project) in order to make responsibilities for equal opportunities and equalities schemes (including the DES) more specific.	Susan Gardner Craig	June 2007
F5	Recommend changes to SCDC's recruitment policy to take account of changing equalities legislation and official requirements (incl. those relating to disability equality).	Jill Mellors	June 2007
F6	Identify 'champions' for equalities (including disability equality) from across the range of SCDC services, as part a new Equal Opportunities officer steering group.	DES lead officer	September 2007

APPENDIX A

Summary of DDA statutory requirements

Disability Discrimination Acts

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 has been amended by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 so that it now places a general duty on all public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- (a) promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons;
- (b) eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act;
- (c) eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities;
- (d) promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons;
- (e) encourage participation by disabled persons in public life; and
- (f) take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

Disability Discrimination Regulations 2005

The Disability Discrimination Regulations 2005 sets out specific duties requiring public authorities to produce and publish a Disability Equality Scheme by 4 December 2006. The essential elements that the Scheme must include are an action plan and:

- (a) a statement of how disabled people have been involved in developing the scheme;
- (b) arrangements for gathering information about the performance of the public body on disability equality;
- (c) arrangements for assessing the impact of the activities of the authority on disability equality and improving these when necessary;
- (d) details of how the authority is going to use the information gathered, in particular in reviewing the effectiveness of its action plan and preparing subsequent schemes.

Desired outcomes

Guidance from the Disability Rights Commission identifies the main aim of the Disability Equality duty as getting public authorities to think and act proactively on disability equality issues from the start. This will help to identify from the beginning, where and how, unnecessary barriers are created to the equal participation of disabled users of their services as well as current and potential employees. This is not just about physical/sensory barriers but also barriers which are created by the way services, policies or practices are designed. Understanding these barriers will help ensure that the public sector plays its full role in enabling disabled people to participate in all aspects of society as equal citizens.

APPENDIX B**Estimated numbers of disabled people
in South Cambridgeshire by age group**

Age group	Disability – national prevalence rates per 1,000 population ¹	South Cambs population (mid-2005 estimate) ²	Estimated disabled population in South Cambridgeshire
0 - 4	21	8,000	168
5 - 9	38	8,700	331
10 - 15	35	10,300	361
16 - 19	21	6,700	141
20 - 24	27	6,900	186
25 - 29	31	6,600	205
30 - 34	40	9,400	376
35 - 39	44	11,000	484
40 - 44	59	11,400	673
45 - 49	79	10,100	798
50 - 54	106	9,000	954
55 - 59	155	9,800	1,519
60 - 64	205	7,500	1,538
65 - 69	275	5,900	1,623
70 - 74	342	4,900	1,676
75 - 79	466	4,100	1,911
80 - 84	616	3,200	1,971
85 +	779	2,800	2,181
Total 0-15	31	27,000	859
Total 16-64	59	88,400	6,873
Total 65+	463	20,900	9,361
Total		136,300	17,093

Sources:

1. Office for Population Census and Surveys - Surveys of disability 1985-1988.
2. Cambridgeshire County Council Research Group Mid-2005 Population Estimates.

APPENDIX C

Further examples of SCDC practices to promote disability equality

COMMUNITY SERVICES

- In 2006/07, the Council has given **grants to local disability groups** amounting to more than £20,000 (prior to council tax capping, it was more than this). These groups include: Crossroads Care; Cambridge Dial-a-Ride; Age Concern (Cambridgeshire); Care Network; Directions Plus (advice for disabled people and carers); Cambridge Joint Play Schemes (for disabled children); Disability Information Service for Huntingdonshire (DISH); the Cambridgeshire Rehabilitation Club for Visually Handicapped; and the Cambridge St Raphael Club for the Disabled.
- The **South Cambridgeshire Voluntary Sector Forum** meets quarterly. Its membership includes: Cambridgeshire ACRE; Age Concern; Cambridge & South Cambs CVS; Cambridge Ethnic Minority Forum; Cambridge Independent Advice Centre; CamSight (for people with a visual impairment); Cambridgeshire Stroke Association; CAMTAD (for deaf and hard of hearing people); Cambridge Volunteer Centre; Citizens' Advice Bureau; Connections Bus Ltd; Crossroads; Directions Plus; John Huntingdon Trust; OWL (Opportunities Without Limits) Group; Speaking Up (for people with mental health problems); Welcome Home from Hospital; Victim Support; Learning Disability Services (County Council); Primary Care Trust; SCDC.
- We link into some of the work of the **Papworth Trust** via the Disability Information Service and the work they are delivering in this area through the Investing in Communities (IiC) programme. We also have links with Speaking Up, which is one of their affiliated organisations working with people with learning disabilities. The Papworth Trust also provides support to a range of disability organisations, most of whom we have links with either through the Voluntary Sector Forum or via some of their IiC work.
- We have helped CamSight make a successful bid for external funding to purchase software for the **Community Access Points**. This will enable people with a visual impairment to use the computers through magnified and voice-over software. Documents that elderly/visually impaired people find difficult to read can be scanned and read out by the voice-over software.
- We give **capital grants** towards improving disabled access and toilets in community facilities, such as village halls.
- There was a disability focus group as part of the **Learning Lessons from Cambourne** community engagement work to help us plan for community facilities/services for Northstowe.
- Some of the young people that the **Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership** works with have learning difficulties. To ensure they fully understand what is being expected of them, particularly when signing an acceptable behaviour contract, we use MAKATON, which is a form sign language. The MAKATON illustrations, along with the wording, help to ensure that the young person understands our requests.
- Improvements at **Milton Country Park** over the last couple of years include upgrading the two disabled toilets and setting aside an area for blue badge-holding drivers only.
- We grant fund local **Mobile Warden schemes**, meeting about 20% of the scheme costs. This has been crucial in allowing new schemes to start in the last 5 years. The schemes, which are based on one or more adjacent villages, tend to help about 15-20 people each - but the largest one in Melbourne helps about 50. The older people signed up to the schemes tend to get daily contact from the warden, in the form of a phone call or a visit, depending on circumstances/

needs at the time. When the wardens call, they make sure the client is ok, have a chat, and may provide help with small tasks like collecting prescriptions. The warden can alert family, adult services or GP if there is a problem.

- South Cambs and Cambridge City **Disability Sports Focus Group** (DSFG) was set up by both local authorities about 4 years ago. It is now a fully constituted group which has not only been a voice for sport in terms of increasing access to services, but has been successful with obtaining grants. This has helped with producing a regular newsletter for members, providing an annual Disability Sports Festival, training for coaches and running term-time and holiday courses for both young people and adults. SCDC helps to co-ordinate the activities provided.
- All DSFG coaches need to attend a Sports Coach UK course in 'Equity in your coaching' and 'Working with disabled sports performers'. Additional **awareness training** has also been provided for coaches either working with autistic children or with adults with a mental health issue.
- The DSFG **Disability Sports Directory**, which is updated every year, is available in large print and in Braille.
- Our joint **Physical Activity strategy** with the Primary Care Trust, aims to increase opportunities for people with a disability. With the City Council, we have held a workshop for key partners to look at the barriers to participation in both a rural and urban setting and how to overcome these barriers.
- SCDC helped with funding and acted as a referee for the first **Inclusive Fitness Initiative** site in the county. This is an English Federation of Disability Sport scheme. The site is part of the new dual-use sports facilities at Sawston Sports Centre. The scheme ensures that all disabilities are provided for in a fitness setting and that all staff (including cleaners) have to attend disability awareness training.
- Through our **Village Sports Facility Grants**, we have helped numerous villages improve disabled access and toilets within their sports pavilions.
- As part of a County Disability Sports Forum, the Sports Development Officer has been working with **Whizz Kids** to provide wheelchair training for young people.
- As part of an annual event for all special needs schools across the county (coming together to 'compete' in a fun festival called **Youth Games Plus**), SCDC supports the work of various coaches. This will provide sports coaching in the new Granta School in Linton and the Pavilion Club at Impington Village College so they can both represent South Cambs at the next event.
- Our Sports Development Officer represents SCDC on the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough **Mental Health Partnership**. This social inclusion work offers weekly multi-sports sessions, weekly aqua fit and gym sessions. It will launch a monthly golf session in January 2007.
- With the **Paralympics** in this country in 2012, we will soon be starting to focus on areas where talented young people with a disability can get access to sport at the right level and how we can access funding to support them.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

The **Home Improvement Agency** (HIA) gives disabled facilities grants to enable disabled people to live independently in their own home or, if that is not possible, it provides grants to help them move to a more suitable property.

- Specific adverts targeting disabled people are put in the Age Concern newsletter.
- We complete any forms for grants with the client, rather than leave them on their own to do it.
- Letters are sent in large print or Braille depending the needs of the client.

- The client is referred for an assessment of entitlement for other benefit (such as Disability Living Allowance) whilst the grant is being processed.
- If the client needs financial help to contribute towards the costs of work, the HIA makes active contact with charities and social services who may be able to help.
- Visits are made to the client rather than them having to visit us at the office.

HOUSING SERVICES

- **Housing Policy** has enabled seven purpose-built new homes for people with a disability over the last two years. Our specialist partner is the Papworth Trust.
- We will be working with a housing association to deliver 35 units for frail elderly people at the Moorlands site in Melbourn which has funding secured, including a contribution from SCDC.
- The construction of 16 units in Sawston for people with mental health problems is expected to start in late 2006.
- Bids for future housing schemes have been submitted to the Housing Corporation. This includes two more schemes for frail elderly people (42 and 36 units respectively) plus 9 dispersed units around the district with Papworth Trust and 21 adapted units at Arbury Park. SCDC has promoted these schemes either through the provision of land or through planning policies that require large-scale developments to make provision for affordable housing. The progress we are able to make will depend on the outcome of current and future bidding rounds.

PLANNING SERVICES

- DCLG Circular 1/2006 has made it a statutory requirement, since August 2006, to provide **Design and Access Statements** with many types of planning applications. These have to address issues related to access for all in terms of layout and the outside environment, amongst other issues.
- To assess the adequacy of these statements, Planning Services and Community Services are in discussion with Directions Plus about possibility of setting up, recruiting and training up an **Access Advisory Group**. This would act as a non-statutory consultee commenting on planning applications for 10 or more housing units.

REVENUE SERVICES

- **We are proactive in ensuring that disabled people receive any Council Tax discount or exemption for which they are eligible.**
 - The availability of a disabled person's reduction for council tax is promoted with all bills.
 - Where an application form has been requested but not returned, we will contact the individual by telephone or personal visit to establish the reason and to provide assistance in completing the form.
 - We work closely with local registered social landlords that specialise in providing homes for disabled people to ensure tenants receive all the benefit or discounts they are entitled to, and to make it as easy as possible to claim their entitlement.
- **We aim to cater for the needs of people with disabilities in accessing our services.**
 - All documentation is available in large print, Braille or audio tape (although at present the availability is not particularly well promoted).

- A member of the Revenues team is trained to level 1 in British Sign Language and is available to act as an interpreter. The Council financed this training.
- We regularly use the Type Talk service to communicate with disabled residents.
- **We adapt our communications with individual customers to take account of their particular disabilities.**
 - Where a resident has advised us that they have a disability that affects their ability to interact with the service, this information is recorded on our Revenues ICT systems.
 - Future communications are appropriately tailored to meet the resident's needs (eg, a resident with visual impairment will be contacted by telephone rather than a letter).
 - Where a person with a disability has difficulty dealing with correspondence, this can be directed, on request, to an alternative address (eg, to a carer or social worker).
 - A wide range of payment options is offered to meet residents' needs. These include direct debit, telephone payments, internet payments, postal payments, cash payments and payment via post offices.
 - Benefit cheques are sent direct to a person's bank where the resident has difficulty in visiting the bank.
- **Disability is taken into account in assessing needs – for example:**
 - when considering awards of discretionary housing payment or backdated awards of Housing or Council Tax benefit;
 - where debt enforcement action is taken - any special requirements due to disability are counted as essential expenditure for the purpose of establishing ability to pay.

CORPORATE SERVICES

Accessibility features at the Council's offices benefit both visitors and employees with disabilities:

- level access from parking spaces for disabled people to the building, with tactile paving slabs;
- public entrance doors with good access for disabled people;
- high visibility edging to circular revolving entrance door and markings on glazing;
- washroom facilities for disabled people, incl. alarms (wall colour contrasts with fixtures/fittings);
- shower facilities for disabled people;
- lift access to all meeting rooms and the public gallery;
- Braille buttons in lifts, plus voice information (eg, going up/down, which floor);
- colour-contrasted carpeting to identify walkways;
- hearing loops in public meeting rooms and headsets available from reception;
- large voting display boards in Council Chamber (chairmen also read out the results of votes);
- fire refuge areas on emergency staircase landings and 'evac-chairs'. We ensure that all fire wardens are trained on the use of evacuation procedures in respect of disabled people.

Experts on access issues, including members of a local disability group, were consulted both on the design of the building at the planning stage and on practical issues once it had been completed and occupied.

APPENDIX D

Views received from local disability groups

Notes from meeting of South Cambridgeshire Voluntary Forum – 18 October 2006

1. What is the scale/type of disability needs in the district?

- “Take the number of people with a disability who use services, and then double it.”
- “There is going to be a huge jump in the number of disabled people who want to do things and be more independent, and who know their rights.”
- “Support is needed to enable people to live in their own homes.”
- “There is going to be a big increase in the elderly population. More community facilities will be needed to care for them. People will be looked after more at home.”
- “Levels of infant disability aren’t decreasing. Advances in medical science mean that people who - in the past - might have died at birth, now survive but with disabilities.”
- “There are 10 million people in this country with hearing loss (including 87% of those who are aged 75 or over).”

2. Which SCDC services do you think are most relevant to promoting disability equality and helping to meet the needs of disabled people in South Cambs?

- “Housing and access”.
- “Access and design. Planning services aren’t always co-operative. Plan vetting (of access statements) isn’t yet in place.”
- “All services. Waste collection, for example.”

3. What are the barriers faced by disabled people in the district?

- “Public buildings, particularly those without hearing loops. Also, noisy environments, particularly if you’ve got tinnitus and hearing loss.”
- “Be aware that wheelchairs are getting much bigger because they do much more. It’s important to make sure that there is enough space for them.”
- “Not bothering to go to places or to attend meetings because it’s too tiring, especially if you’re elderly and have a disability.”
- “Disabled people are getting too tired to fight injustices.”
- “Attitudes and lack of knowledge. We don’t expect council staff to be experts, but we would like them to use our expertise.”
- “If you’re going to do staff training, please make use of people who have a disability, not just those who think they know what it is like to be disabled.”

4. What's SCDC doing well to promote disability equality? What aren't we doing well?

- "You can get into South Cambs Hall and to the reception desk, but is there a hearing loop there?." (The answer is 'yes').
- "More and more, it's getting difficult to find space to have meetings at South Cambs Hall. When meetings have to be arranged elsewhere, it is important for staff to make sure that the location is DDA compliant. If there isn't a hearing loop there or it can't be used properly, then that's actually against the law."
- "Make consultations with the voluntary sector DDA compliant."
- "Statutory sector organisations don't use local disability groups as much as they should. Disability groups are happy to help."

5. How could SCDC improve, within the resource constraints facing the Council? What are the three most important changes that the District Council could make as part of the Disability Equality Scheme action plan?

- "You can buy a mobile hearing loop for less than £100."
- "Make sure that proper meeting etiquette is observed at meetings. Don't speak over one another."
- "Get people to ask for advice. My disability group would be happy to do your training."
- "Use proper mix of upper and lower case letters – this benefits visually impaired people."
- "Get plan vetting (via an Access Advisory Group) in place quickly."
- "The most effective things are cheapest. Being sued for non-compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act isn't."

APPENDIX E

Views received from individuals with personal experience of disability issues

Based on replies from district councillors and SCDC staff in October/November 2006

1. What is the scale/type of disability needs in the district?

- “People with a mental disability face a real problem when their ageing parents or other permanent carers die or are otherwise unable to continue to look after them.”
- “The most debilitating disabilities are those that are invisible - given that, generally speaking, if people see that you are in a wheelchair or carrying a white stick they tend to try to be helpful, whereas deafness or mental illness is not so readily apparent.”

2. Which SCDC services do you think are most relevant to promoting disability equality and helping to meet the needs of disabled people in South Cambs?

- “For residents, the main issues appear to be housing, and rural public transport (not a direct service, I know).”
- “Housing and community services.”

3. What are the barriers faced by disabled people in the district?

- “I am partially-sighted, but I regard this more as a challenge rather than as a disability.”
- “In my ward, there is a housing estate, built in the 1950s. It has limited parking facilities and the entrance is choked with parked cars. Some of the residents are wheelchair-bound. Some are severely handicapped and have to be carried to cars. This also causes hold-ups for other road users.”
- “Most of the negatives have to do, in my view, with transport issues. There’s a lack of disabled parking in villages. Pavement conditions are atrocious. There’s no access to trains at a couple of local railway stations. One bus a day from my village to Cambridge (at 7.45am) just won’t do the trick.”
- “It’s all about getting out and being with people, not being isolated. The system really doesn’t cater for the whole range of practical, daily mobility needs. If you find yourself in a state of disability, the availability of suitable public toilets are a real issue.”
- “A few hasty or ill-considered words can be completely crushing to these vulnerable people whose confidence is generally lacking to begin with.”
- “Mutual incomprehension and bewilderment. I’m not sure what kind of training is available to raise awareness of these issues, and especially in the kind of appropriate ways of speaking (especially avoiding any kind of patronising tone or vocabulary). Do organisations like MIND offer visits to employers to give courses or whatever?”

4. What's SCDC doing well to promote disability equality?

- “The provision of staff transport, without which I would have found it very difficult to relocate to the Cambourne offices. The service is due to finish in April 2008.”
- “SCDC makes publicity available in all kinds of formats – this is fantastic. The availability of large print, recorded material etc is excellent.”
- “Staff generally are disability-aware, even before any specific training.”

4a. What aren't we doing well?

- “I have on-going issues with the layout of the Council's website when it comes to changing font size, but I can live with that.”
- “Within the Council Chamber, we need to address the microphone, hearing loop and monitor issues, when funds permit.”
- “Whilst the new offices are more wheelchair-friendly than Hills Road, the flip side is that Cambourne is probably not as accessible as Cambridge.”

5. How could SCDC improve, within the resource constraints facing the Council?

- “Address any inequality flowing from the closure of the cash office – I would guess that those preferring to pay cash to people, rather than via the internet or banks, are more likely to be the elderly and those suspicious of technology.”
- “Make agendas and reports available in large print. There should be no underlining in minutes, agendas or reports. Underlining can cause difficulties for people who are visually impaired or dyslexic (an underlined 'y' may look like a 'v').”
- “It would help if the website retained its basic formatting regardless of how viewers resize the text and regardless of resolution settings. Could the Council also make sure that the website can be used fully by those people using screen readers?”
- “Continue to minimise the use of jargon and encourage the use of plain English.”
- “Provide information on request, on audio tape, CD, CD-ROM and Braille.”
- “There needs to be a bigger understanding amongst managers, though the Human Resources team has been wonderful in helping me.”

6. What are the three most important changes that the District Council could make as part of the Disability Equality Scheme action plan?

- Social inclusion / community involvement (as opposed to separate disability groupings); safety through good design; empowering self-achievement.”
- “Teach all staff not to judge by appearances. At least one member of staff, preferably quite senior, should be qualified in dealing with people with learning difficulties and other mental incapacities.”
- “Better quality pavements for wheelchairs. Lobby for better access to trains. Disability benefit needs to be more accessible.”